

'BAMA

INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

SEPTEMBER, 1994

VOLUME 16, NUMBER 7

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Inside
• Football
Begins

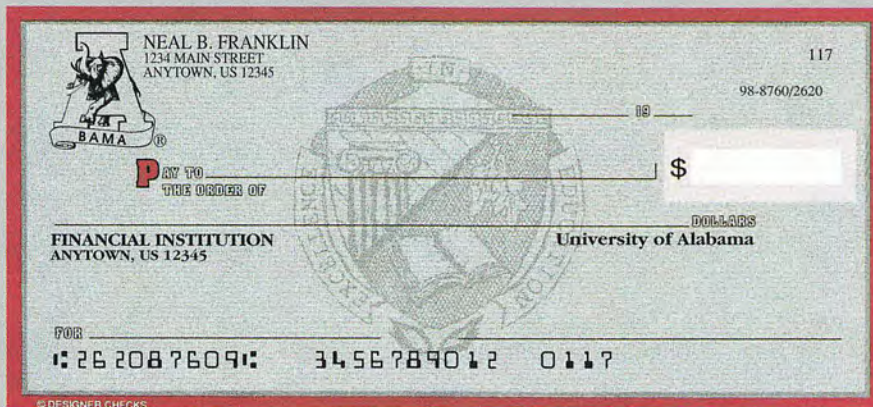
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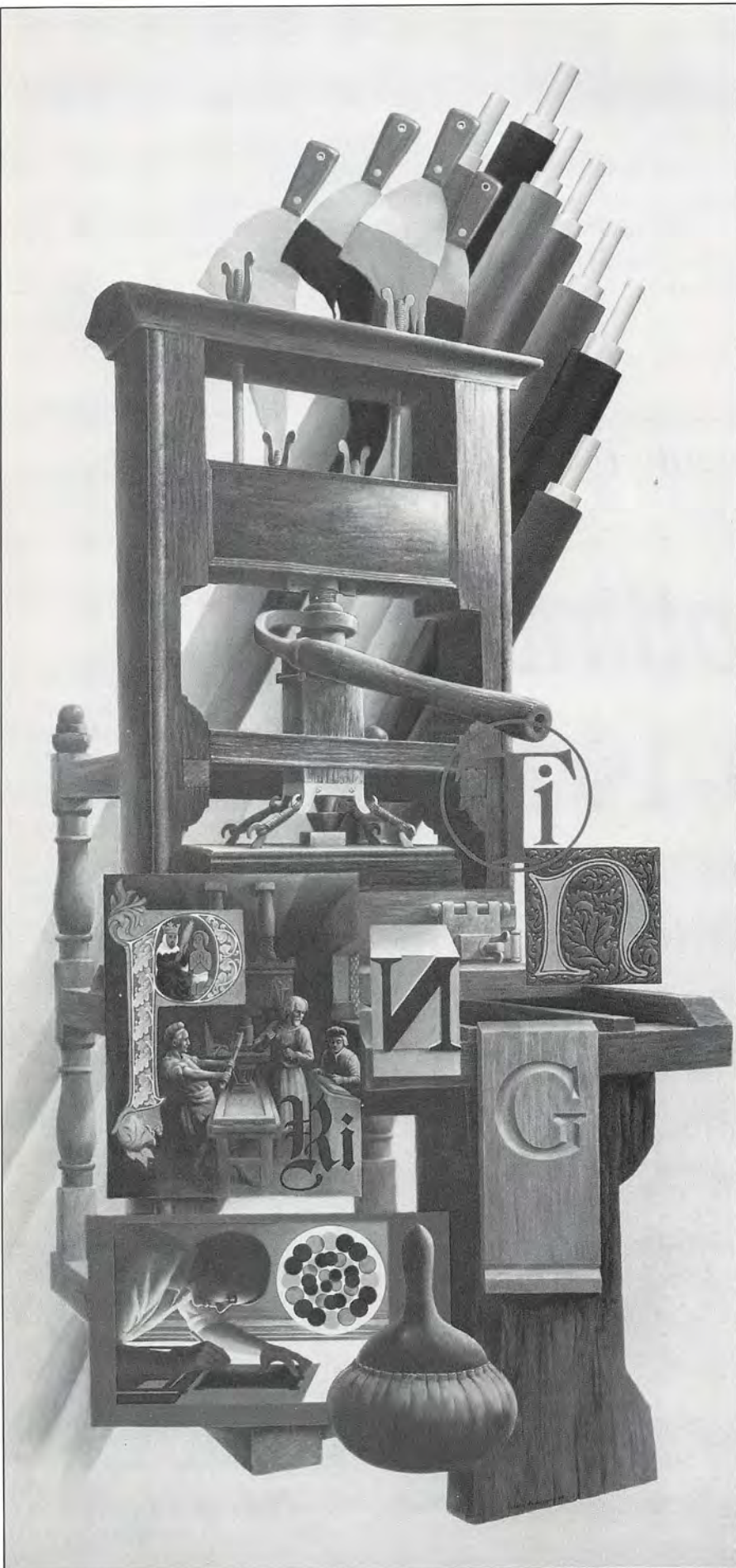
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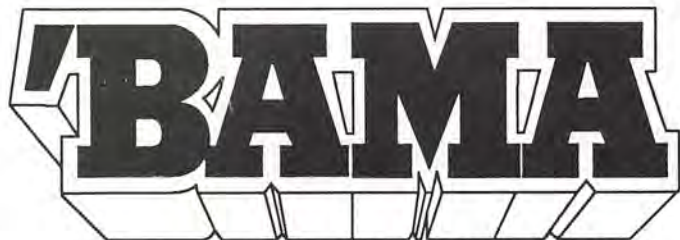
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INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

SEPTEMBER, 1994

VOLUME 16, NUMBER 7

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University of Alabama Photo by Kent Gidley



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Junior offensive guard Maurice Belser has seen limited playing time as a back-up performer the past two years, but now he's reached one of his goals, first team. As a starter he wants to be a contributor to Bama winning. by Donald F. Staffo



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Over the years, Alabama football has been built primarily with home-grown high school talent. But the very best Crimson Tide teams have also included players from out-of-state. Bama recruiters may be staying close to home this year, but Alabama's national reputation means plenty of out-of-state prep stars are interested in the Tide. by Kirk McNair



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This Should Be A Good One

by Kirk McNair

Tide shows good talent and depth in preparation for 1994 football season

Consider the factors that go into a winning (and possibly championship) football team. Two factors fall into the luck category: schedule luck and injury luck, and a team has little, if any, control over either. A team avoiding the injury bug, such as Alabama in 1992, might go undefeated and win the national championship. A team hit with injuries at critical positions, such as Alabama in 1993, might lose a couple of games it should win. While an athletics director can schedule easy non-league games (such as Tennessee-Chattanooga, Tulane and Southern Miss), the fate of an Alabama hinges on its success in conference games.

(A quick aside: *The Gainesville (Florida) Sun*, in a preseason look at the Southeastern Conference, predicts Alabama to go 9-2 in regular season games, which is a reasonable prediction. But the newspaper predicts Bama's SEC record as 7-1. Which non-conference game is *The Sun* seeing as a loss?)

Critical factors that go into football success are having good football players, putting them in the correct positions, and coaching them to be at their best each week.

With less than two weeks to go before Alabama opens its season against the aforementioned Tennessee-Chattanooga, the thing most evident about the 1994 Crimson Tide is that there are lots and lots of big, strong, fast football players. The credentials of those who coach them (and put them in positions) are well-established. Head Coach Gene Stallings, national coach of the year in 1992, is considered by many to have the nation's best staff, the offense under Homer Smith, the defense under Bill Oliver.

Practices have been impressive. Although there was one bad morning and one horrid night scrimmage performance by the offense, in both cases the group re-grouped. Following the poor morning workout, the



Jay Barker

offense returned in the evening to dominate the defense in a full-speed, first team against first team, goalline drill. Following the poorest scrimmage by an Alabama offense seen in Tuscaloosa in many years on a Thursday night, the Tide offense rebounded with an excellent performance in a Saturday scrimmage.

The Alabama offense isn't going to out-physical the defense. But don't look for any Crimson Tide opponents to out-physical the Bama stop troops. Alabama's offensive success includes good, tough running, but the primary factor has been play selection and execution. This Alabama team is likely to pass when expected to run, run when expected to pass, and execute a relatively few number of plays very well. Expect to say several times during the year, "I didn't know who had the ball." One thing quarterbacks coached by Homer Smith do very, very well is fake-fake the handoff and fake not making the handoff.

Another very positive aspect of Alabama quarterback play in the early going has been the comeback of Jay Barker. Although the senior Barker is no better than bracketed with junior Brian Burgdorf (who finished last season as number one and got most of the work in spring training, leading to his position as first team this fall), Barker shows no signs of the knee injury that knocked him out of play late last year. And he shows many signs of being an exceptional quarterback in this offense. It was



Sherman Williams

particularly comforting to see Barker look off his primary receiver, then his secondary receiver, then complete a pass to his third option in a recent scrimmage. The biggest question mark in the quarterback race is the status of soph Freddie Kitchens, who has been hampered by soreness in his chest, where he had surgery to repair a tendon following spring training.

There is a belief that a Homer Smith offense is a passing offense, but Smith—as the head coach—has as his first goal a strong running game. And even though Bama spent much of the early work without some of its strongest runners, the running game has been impressive. The return of halfback Brian Steger and fullbacks Tarrant Lynch and Taurus Turner should make the running attack even better. While Steger (slight knee strain) missed work, redshirt freshman Curtis Alexander and true freshman Dennis Riddle showed great promise. The absence of Lynch (ankle) and Turner (hamstring pull) gave true freshman Ed Scissum a lot of snaps, and he made the most of many of them. But the star runner has been senior halfback Sherman Williams.

The Tide wide receiving corps has been hot and cold. Speedy Marcell West, who is Bama's best bet for a deep threat, makes some excellent catches and some astounding drops. Chad Key, very sure-handed in the past, has been only adequate in fall

work. Best work has been by split end Curtis Brown, returning after missing 1993 with a knee injury, and flanker Toderick Malone. Any way you look at it, Bama's wide receiving corps has a tough time living up to last year, where two National Football League second round draft choices, Kevin Lee and the incomparable David Palmer, are missing.

Tight end has gotten an interesting new ingredient. Freshman Rod Rutledge has been one of the most impressive newcomers. And that wasn't a weak spot with Tony Johnson and Patrick Hape, two of Bama's better athletes, returning. Look for Alabama to use the three tight end set (Hape a slot, or H, back) in goalline situations.

The big question again this year is the offensive line. Stallings said prior to the beginning of fall work that by the end of the year no one would be saying the offensive line was a Tide weakness. There are positive signs about the front, but there are still questions. The questions are primarily: Can the players, most of them only moderately experienced, get the job done; and: Which ones?

A discussion of the offensive line usually centers on center. Jon Stevenson is described as the only returning starter, but Stevenson, a former tackle and guard who is making the move to center, is no more experienced than left tackle Joey Harville, a backup on both sides last year who played about as many snaps as either of the departed starters, Matt Hammond and Roosevelt Patterson.

While Stevenson is listed as the number one center, John Causey has come on strong this fall. Harville has left tackle nailed down, and it's a help that Kareem McNeal came back in excellent condition at left tackle. A pair of redshirt freshmen, Joel Holliday and Chris



John Walters

Jordan, continue their battle at right tackle with Holliday holding onto number one. The best battles on the team may be at guard where Maurice Belser is trying to hold off Jeremy Pennington and Will Friend on the left side and LaRon White is battling Pete DiMario on the right side.

The most difficult thing about a discussion of the defense is figuring out which four will be the first four, which four will be the second four, and which four will be the third four on the front four. One thing to consider: when opposing offensive linemen trudge to the line of scrimmage in the fourth quarter, they will be looking at defensive linemen who are not sweating or breathing hard. The Tide has the chance to be very fresh on the front four.

It's difficult to determine a depth chart in part because there are so many quality defensive linemen and in part because about a third of them are capable of playing both tackle and end. Elverett Brown has been injured part of the fall, but he'll be one of the front four. So will Shannon Brown, Ozell Powell, Damiecan Jeffries, Kendrick Burton, Kelvin Moore, Darrell Blackburn, junior college transfer Matt



Tommy Johnson

Parker, and Vann Bodden. And don't count out newcomers Chris Hood (signed as a linebacker but checking in at 266 pounds) and Eric Kerley and tough walk-on Anthony Dowdell.

If there is a position close to defensive line with quality depth it is linebacker. Consider that André Royal, reinstated to the team this fall with his final

chance to fly right, is a back-up. Royal is a potential first round pro draft choice. He's backing up redshirt freshman Paul Pickett, who hasn't been quite as impressive in the fall as he was in the spring, but who is very solid at strongside linebacker. On the weak side, sophomore Ralph Staten, has been even more impressive this fall than he was in the spring, and he was extraordinary in the spring. Throw in Fernando Davis on the strong side and John Tanks and Lamont Floyd on the weak side, and then look at impressive newcomers like Chris Edwards, Tito Smith, Eddie Hunter, and, most impressive of all, Steven Harris.

At middle linebacker, John Walters has done an excellent job of holding off returning starter Michael Rogers. And it's not because Rogers, notorious for being a much better game player than practice player, hasn't been doing well. Tyrell Buckner didn't come back in great shape and freshman



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Dwayne Rudd may have moved in front of him for the third spot.

Secondary Coach Bill Oliver earned his crying towel from the best of them, Paul Bryant, and compared to the depth at the front seven positions, there is some shallowness in the defensive backfield for Oliver to weep about. But it's not all bad.

One National Football League scout said Alabama had two sure first round draft choices, possible three, from the secondary. Strong safety Sam Shade and left cornerback Tommy Johnson are sure things and if Willie Gaston can win the starting job at safety, he could be a third. But can Gaston win the job at safety? It partly depends on whether he plays safety. Right cornerback is of some concern and Gaston has spent time at both spots in the fall. The play of freshman DeShea Townsend has been particularly encouraging at that spot. And when junior college transfer Brad Ford finally got eligible about 10 days into practice, that helped the position more. When a handful of returning players were placed on medical scholarship, that opened up a scholarship for senior walk-on cornerback Micky Conn. Additionally, Blair Canale had a very good spring (not quite as good a fall) at safety, and one of the most interesting moves of the fall has been that of freshman quarterback John David Phillips moving to safety, where he has been very effective. Shae is backed by a very-improved (and slimmed down) Eric Turner at strong safety.

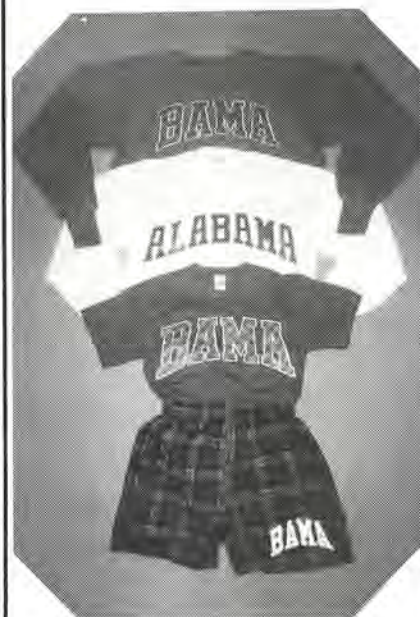
When one thinks of the kicking game, one thinks primarily of the kickers, and Alabama has good ones. Michael Proctor has been very good on his field goal tries and Bryne Diehl has been punting the ball well. But there is much more to the kicking game than just the kickers.

The job of snapper was one that concerned Stallings, but Chester Lewis has looked good in that role. Diehl returns as the holder, and the former high school quarterback is a good hands man.

Additionally, those big, fast linebackers of which Alabama has an abundance make for good coverage men.

The return game did not receive a great deal of attention in the early going, but backs like Riddle and Alexander should be strong kickoff return men, and Townsend, Malone, and Rhondi Gibson have all shown an ability to catch punts, although it's not realistic to expect a punt return man like David Palmer to emerge from the group.

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1994 Alabama Football Roster

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No	Name, Pos.	Cl.	Hgt.	Wgt.	Exp.	Hometown	No	Name, Pos.	Cl.	Hgt.	Wgt.	Exp.	Hometown
1	Marcell West, flk	So.	5-11	177	1L	Niceville, Fla.	52	Michael Rogers, ilb	Sr.	6-1	232	3L	Luverne
2	DeShea Townsend, cb	Fr.	5-10	170	HS	Batesville, Miss.	53	Darrell Smith, c	Jr.	6-2	265	Sq	Munford
3	Michael Proctor, pk	Jr.	5-11	183	2L	Pelham	54	Anthony Dowdell, de	So.	6-1	226	Sq	Columbus, Ga.
5	Tony Johnson, te	Jr.	6-5	256	2L	Como, Miss.	55	Fernando Davis, olb	So.	6-3	245	1L	Aberdeen, Miss.
6	Lance Tucker, qb	Fr.	6-0	175	RS	Fayette	56	Chris Jordan, rt	Fr.	6-4	283	RS	Jackson
7	Jay Barker, qb	Sr.	6-3	215	3L	Trussville	57	Lamont Floyd, olb	So.	6-2	250	1L	Orange Park, Fla.
8	Tracy High, s	So.	5-9	175	1L	Pontotoc, Miss.	58	Matt Harrison, c-lg	Fr.	6-5	275	HS	Dadeville
9	Freddie Kitchens, qb	So.	6-4	225	1L	Attalla	59	Chris Edwards, olb	Fr.	6-2	225	HS	Bessemer
10	Tommy Johnson, cb	Sr.	5-10	181	3L	Niceville, Fla.	60	Joey Harville, lt	Sr.	6-5	275	3L	Moulton
10	David Goss, qb	Fr.	5-11	175	RS	Warner Robins, Ga.	60	D.J. Jones, olb	Fr.	6-0	210	RS	Valley
11	Brad Ford, cb	Jr.	5-10	170	JC	Dadeville	61	Chris Sign, c	Fr.	6-0	250	HS	Arlington, Texas
12	Bryne Diehl, p	Sr.	6-3	215	2L	Oakman	62	Michael Ray, dt	Fr.	6-5	305	RS	Boaz
13	Cedric Samuel, cb	So.	5-9	177	1L	Demopolis	63	Sage Spree, rt	Fr.	6-4	295	HS	Eutaw
14	Brian Burgdorf, qb	Jr.	6-3	197	2L	Cedartown, Ga.	64	Maurice Belser, lg	Jr.	6-2	277	2L	Cordova
15	William Watts, pk	So.	6-1	180	1L	Pleasant Grove	65	Jackson Cook, snap	So.	6-1	260	Sq	Cullman
16	Josh Niblett, fb-te	Jr.	6-2	222	1L	Demopolis	66	Granison Wagstaff, ilb	Fr.	6-2	240	HS	Enterprise
17	Warren Foust, qb	Fr.	6-3	205	HS	Midwest City, Okla.	67	Franz Odom, ilb	Fr.	6-1	240	HS	Semmes
18	John David Phillips, s	Fr.	6-4	195	HS	Anniston	68	Will Friend, lg	Fr.	6-2	270	RS	Philadelphia, Miss.
19	Chad Key, se	Jr.	6-5	213	1L	Parrish	69	Jon Stevenson, c	Sr.	6-3	285	3L	Memphis
20	Sherman Williams, hb	Sr.	5-10	185	3L	Mobile	70	Rhett Crutchfield, lt	Fr.	6-3	260	HS	Birmingham
21	Montoya Madden, hb	Fr.	5-9	205	HS	Town Creek	71	John Causey, c	So.	6-2	262	1L	Hayneville
22	Willie Gaston, cb-s	Sr.	5-11	190	2L	Mobile	72	Pete DiMario, rg	So.	6-4	286	1L	Tuscaloosa
23	Andre Short, ss	Fr.	5-11	205	RS	LaGrange, Ga.	73	Josh Swords, rg	Fr.	6-3	270	HS	Brentwood, Tenn.
24	Blair Canale, s	So.	6-3	199	1L	Memphis	74	Kareem McNeal, rt	Jr.	6-5	270	2L	Tuskegee
25	Dameian Vallery, hb	Fr.	6-2	200	RS	Houston, Texas	74	Brad Ransom, dt	Jr.	5-11	215	Sq	Huntsville
27	Danny Davis, ss	Sr.	6-2	213	2L	Memphis	75	Shannon Brown, dt	Jr.	6-5	266	2L	Millbrook
28	Brian Steger, hb	So.	6-3	220	1L	New Market	76	Elverett Brown, de	Sr.	6-4	284	3L	Montgomery
29	Dennis Riddle, hb	Fr.	6-0	195	HS	Tuscaloosa	76	Jeff McCullough, lt	Jr.	6-4	255	Sq	Oneonta
30	Taurus Turner, fb	So.	6-1	200	1L	Fort Payne	77	Joel Holliday, rt	Fr.	6-3	300	RS	Six Mile, S.C.
31	Sam Shade, ss	Sr.	6-0	195	3L	Birmingham	78	Ozell Powell, dt	So.	6-5	295	1L	Greenville
32	Curtis Alexander, hb	Fr.	6-1	195	RS	Memphis	79	Jeremy Pennington, lg	So.	6-2	272	1L	Vernon
33	Ed Scissum, fb	Fr.	6-1	215	HS	Attalla	80	Toderick Malone, flk	Jr.	5-11	171	1L	Attalla
34	Chris Hood, dt	Fr.	6-3	266	HS	Town Creek	81	Edgar Walker, de	Fr.	6-4	240	RS	Dothan
35	Owen Winston, cb	Fr.	6-0	175	HS	Montgomery	82	Thad Abernathy, flk	Fr.	6-0	160	RS	Enterprise
35	Derek Cunningham, cb	Fr.	5-8	150	RS	Pelham	83	Calvin Hall, se	Fr.	6-4	190	HS	Gallatin, Tenn.
36	André Royal, olb	Sr.	6-2	228	2L	Northport	84	Roman Colburn, se	Sr.	6-0	180	2L	Fort Payne
37	Rhondi Gibson, wr	Jr.	5-10	185	RS	Brewton	85	Curtis Brown, se	Jr.	6-2	185	2L	John's Island, S.C.
38	Patrick Hape, te	So.	6-4	249	1L	Killen	85	Shelby Robbins, ilb	Jr.	5-11	230	Sq	Mobile
39	Eric Turner, ss	Jr.	6-1	200	2L	Fort Payne	86	Rod Rutledge, te	Fr.	6-5	250	HS	Birmingham
40	Mickey Conn, cb	Sr.	5-10	175	2L	Snellville, Ga.	87	Dwayne Rudd, ilb	Fr.	6-3	240	HS	Batesville, Miss.
41	Ralph Staten, olb	So.	6-3	200	1L	Semmes	88	Chester Lewis, snap	So.	6-4	236	Sq	Tuscaloosa
42	Paul Pickett, olb	Fr.	6-2	215	RS	LaGrange, Ga.	89	Tito Smith, olb	Fr.	6-3	210	HS	Birmingham
43	Steve Harris, olb	Fr.	6-2	220	HS	Town Creek	90	John Walters, ilb	Jr.	6-2	225	2L	Dallas
44	Darrell Blackburn, de	So.	6-3	244	1L	Huntsville	91	Dameian Jeffries, de	Sr.	6-5	275	3L	Sylacauga
45	Tarrant Lynch, fb	Sr.	6-0	215	3L	Town Creek	92	Tyrell Buckner, ilb	So.	6-0	250	1L	Denison, Texas
45	Jason Cole, olb	Sr.	6-2	209	Sq	Albertville	93	Steve Thompson, de	Fr.	6-5	270	RS	Birmingham
46	John Tanks, olb	So.	6-4	226	1L	Butler	94	Kendrick Burton, dt	Jr.	6-5	288	1L	Hartselle
47	Eddie Hunter, olb	Fr.	6-2	225	HS	Mobile	95	Kelvin Moore, de	So.	6-3	265	1L	Daphne
48	Trevis Smith, ilb	Fr.	6-1	235	HS	Montgomery	96	Bryan Thornton, dt	Jr.	6-7	280	2L	Mobile
48	Anthony Burroughs, fb	Jr.	5-11	208	Sq	Rogersville	97	Vann Bodden, dt	Jr.	6-5	267	1L	Moss Point, Miss.
49	Jeff Foshee, fb	Sr.	5-9	207	3L	Millbrook	98	Eric Kerley, dt	Fr.	6-2	280	HS	Birmingham
50	Howie Fell, olb	Jr.	6-1	225	Sq	Birmingham	99	Matt Parker, dt	Jr.	6-4	275	JC	Lawton, Okla.
51	LaRon White, rg	So.	6-2	282	1L	Courtland							

First Team Has Been His Goal

by Donald F. Staffo

Two years of back-up work have been satisfying, but this is opportunity he has wanted

Maurice Belser, Alabama's projected starter at left guard this football season, is no stranger to the position. He has been a regular back-up performer for the past two years. Now he's anxious "to play and try to be a force for this team."

After clearing holes which helped Cordova reach the state semifinals his senior year and twice being named all-state for Coach Tim O'Neil, Belser in 1992 was one of five true freshmen to see action for the Crimson Tide. "It felt pretty good to come in my first year, and, not knowing much, to be a part of a national championship team," he said. "Anytime

you can be a part of a national championship team it's great, but coming in and being new, it was an overwhelming feeling."

Belser wasn't completely surprised to be a part of the Tide team as a true freshman. "I came from a strong high school program, and I came in with the idea of playing my first year," he said. He played about 18 snaps per game as a freshman, including a season-high 31 against South Carolina. Last year he was a starter on the placekicking special teams and was a back-up to both John Clay at left guard and Jon Stevenson at right guard. He got his greatest amount of playing

time in Bama's Gator Bowl victory over North Carolina. "I think the coaching staff was looking forward to this year and wanted to see what some of the younger guys could do," Belser said. He played 35 snaps in that victory.

"It was more thrilling and the atmosphere was more exciting being at the Sugar Bowl the year before, but I didn't get to play in that game. So, from a self-esteem standpoint, the Gator Bowl was a better feeling for me knowing that I contributed to a bowl win." More than that, the experience gained from competing in a New Year's Eve bowl game when the outcome was on the line should pay dividends this year. Belser believes he is ready for the challenge of stepping up to the first team.

"There's going to be a lot more pressure," he said, "but that's what I've been waiting for and working for all this time. That time I spent on the bench I wished that I was in the game and contributing. Now I have a chance to be the first one out there with the opportunity to make a big difference in the game."

Belser admits that he could have done more to increase his playing time, perhaps even enough to have earned a starting position earlier. "Before, I came in with the attitude that I just needed to be good enough to help out," he said. "But now as a starter, I feel I have to be top-notch, because I've got a lot of competition." Belser sees that competition as external—the defensive linemen he'll be lining up against in Southeastern Conference games; and internal—Jeremy Pennington and Will Friend, the men behind him on the depth chart, are working hard to move ahead of Belser.

But Belser plans to keep his spot, a position he thinks now he could have earned last year with a better attitude. "I think I kind of let myself down last season," he said. "I should have been a starter, but I didn't do the things necessary to start. Looking back, I'm disappointed in myself. I

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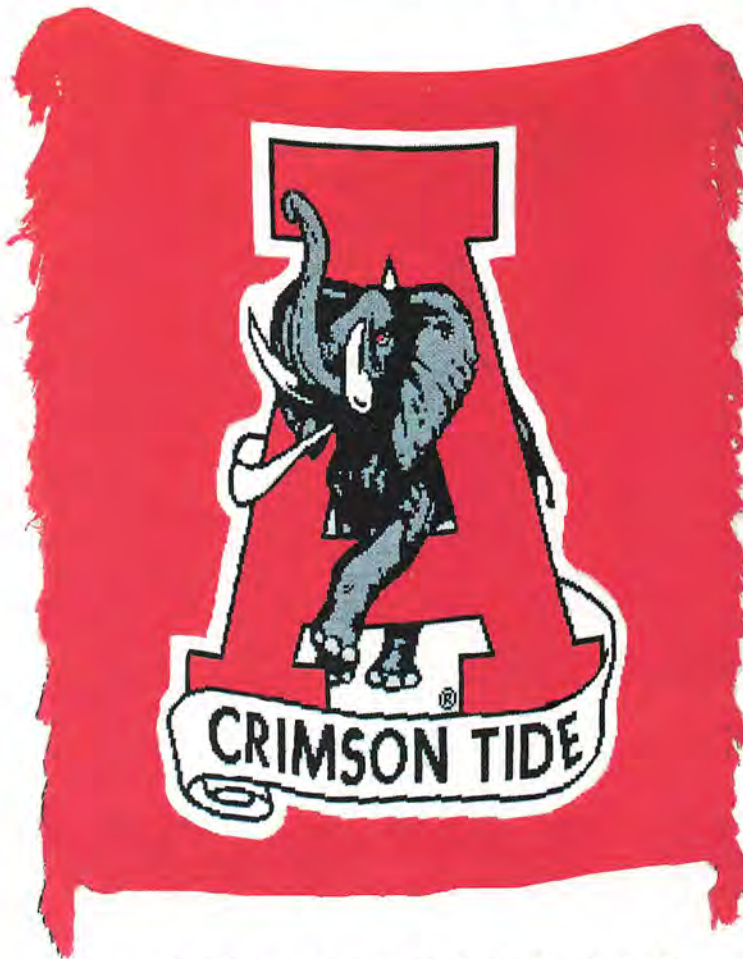
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Maurice Belser has a number of plans, but for now his main goal is to be a starter and a contributor to Alabama football success.

Barry Fikes Photo

can't really explain it, but I wouldn't let myself succeed. I held myself back. I could try to blame it on a lot of things, but it comes down to me.

"It took the Gator Bowl for me to realize that. Now the 1993 season is behind me and I'm working for the season ahead. I've got a chance to really do the thing that I should have done last year, and that is to start.

Jimmy Fuller, Belser's position coach, said, "He started making a move late last season, then had a good spring. And his carryover from spring has been good. I think he's more comfortable with himself than anytime since he's been here."

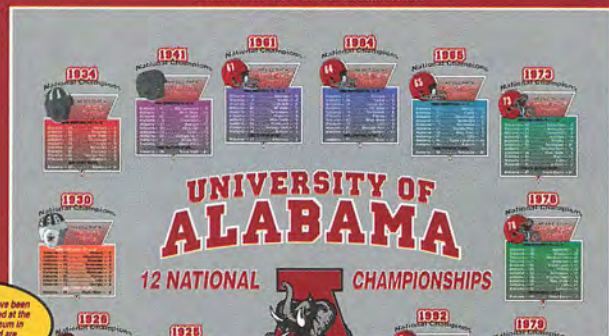
Belser said he worked harder during the summer to get ready for the 1994 season. In addition to joining his teammates for two and a half hours of lifting weights three days a week, interspersed with sprint running workouts two days a week, he ran three miles every night.

Belser, who bench presses 385 pounds, squads 450, and runs a 5.2 40-yard dash, thinks his best playing weight is around

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277, nearly 15 pounds less than he carried on his 6-2 frame last year. "I want to be lighter so I can improve my speed," he said.

Fuller, said, "I was afraid 'Shug' (a nickname Belser has carried since his childhood) was getting a little heavy this summer, but he got it under control."

Satisfied with his strength and quickness, he is also concentrating on improving his technique. "I have a tendency to play high, but for an offensive lineman to be effective, he's got to stay lower than the defensive man. I'm working on that."

Belser thinks he has an advantage in that he picks up things quickly. "I'm smart," he said. "I can pick up plays and situations pretty quick."

He was also quick to pick his college, choosing Alabama over LSU and Georgia Tech. "Auburn knew that I wanted to come here, so they didn't even waste their time talking to me," he said. "I'm from Alabama and I'd always heard about Alabama. I realized how proud everyone in the state is of The University of Alabama and I wanted to be a part of the program."

"But," he said, "I was also real interested in the business school. It's not often you find a place that is most outstanding in sports and in the particular academic area you are interested in. I was looking for both and Alabama had both."

Belser has made a plan. To be sure, the soft-spoken junior hopes that his future includes play-for-pay in the National Football League. But he's putting a lot more stock into his education, earning his degree in business management.

"I hear people saying that I can go pro," Belser said, "and I'm hoping for a professional football career. But my main goal is to get a degree in business management. I want to have a comfortable future and maybe start my own business or management firm one day. I'm trying to make the NFL, but if that doesn't happen I'm not going to go through life with my head down. I'm just going to go into my business career."

Belser didn't just become interested in academics. In addition to his all-state playing career in high school, he was also named to the *Birmingham News* Scholastic All-State team.

And his future plans also include someone else. Last April he was married. From a practical standpoint, Belser believes being married will add stability and direction to his life. "I wanted to settle down and have someone to take care of," he said. "And when you're married, you avoid some of the temptations that other college students have."

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Brian Steger:

Willingness To Work Pays Off

by John Barnes

After surprisingly strong first year, look for big things from a big back

Brian Steger has never been one to rest on his laurels. Alabama's surprise of the 1993 football season feels as if he's always had to work just a little harder, run a little faster, give that extra boost of energy when other players are gasping for breath and heading for the water cooler.

For the sophomore tailback from New Market, going the extra mile is something he's always had to do. "I've always had to work hard for just about everything," said Steger. "Nothing has come real easy for me, but I think it has made me stronger."

Steger's work ethic has certainly paid off on the gridiron. A virtual unknown at the start of the 1993 season, Steger burst on the scene, thrilling fans and coaches alike with his all-

out, reckless running style. At season's end, he had emerged as the Tide's third leading rusher.

Not bad for a kid who received very little attention when he reported last August with the rest of the Tide freshmen. However, all that changed after the first week of practice. Larry Kirksey, then-Bama running backs coach, was impressed. "I've never seen anything like it," he said. "He was like a man possessed. He absolutely refused to be tackled."

Ivy Williams, Kirksey's replacement, echoes the sentiment. "From what I've seen, Brian has tremendous potential. He's a big, strong kid who's hard to bring down one-on-one. He can run over you or around you. It's really impressive when you consider he's only a sophomore."

Steger's straight-ahead, vertical running style appears to be a departure from the Stacey/Lassic/Williams cut-and-slash style Tide fans have become accustomed to in recent years. Don't be fooled, though. Steger feels he can juke and swivel with the best of them. "Last year, I just did what came natural," said the 6-2, 210-pounder. "A lot of that was because I played safety as well as running back in high-school. I still had some of that defensive mentality. I've always enjoyed running over people, but when you play like that,

you up your chances of getting hurt. I think this year I'll try to be a little more elusive."

With the departure of Kirksey and Mal Moore, who was Bama's *de facto* offensive coordinator, Steger once again finds himself in a position to battle for playing time. Despite an excellent freshman season and a spectacular spring, Steger must once again prove himself to Williams and new Offensive Coordinator Homer Smith.

With no fewer than seven running backs on scholarship, Steger will not only battle 1993 starter Sherman Williams for playing time, but also newcomers Curtis Alexander, Dameian Vallery and a number of talented incoming freshmen.

Steger wouldn't have it any other way. "I love the competition," he said. "It makes everybody better. When two-a-days start, everyone is equal. Sherman and I have the most experience, but you never know what some of these other guys might do. The two guys that were redshirted last year (Alexander and Vallery) are explosive and could have a big impact. Some of the new guys (Dennis Riddle, Kenneth Scissum, Montoya Madden) could make some noise. You just can't take anything for granted."

Nevertheless, Steger was arguably the Tide's most consistent back in 1993. Sherman Williams, who dazzled fans with a record-tying five straight 100-yard games to start the season, was injured during the year and didn't regain his early season form until the Gator Bowl. Bama's other tailback in 1993 was the graduated Chris Anderson, also beset with injuries last year.

Throughout the season, Steger quietly went about his business, rushing for 270 yards and two touchdowns on 46 carries while leading Tide backs in average yards-per-carry with 5.4.

In Bama's third game of the year against Arkansas, Steger rushed nine times for 61 yards and caught two passes for 21 yards. Steger was quickly becoming a fan favorite, running with a reckless abandon not seen since the days of Wilbur Jackson and Johnny Musso.

On a cold homecoming day in October against Southern Miss, Steger had by far his finest game of the year. On a day when most fans and probably a few players wished they were somewhere else, Brian rushed seven

Sophomore Brian Steger is a bigger, stronger tailback than Alabama fans have seen in recent years. He expects Bama to have a big year.

Barry Fikes Photo



times for 99 yards, averaging 14 yards per carry. Most of it came on a fourth quarter 67-yard touchdown jaunt, the Tide's longest run from scrimmage for the year. Not bad for someone, who, early in the year, Tide fans were referring to as "Brian who?"

Granted an eleventh-hour scholarship due a late reporting of his ACT score, Steger was not well known outside the small Madison County town of New Market. Steger's alma mater, Buckhorn High School, has never been regarded as a producer of top-notch football talent. Due to an unsuccessful transfer attempt, Steger did not participate in football his junior year. However, his statistics for his sophomore and senior years are impressive. Rushing for 1,640 yards and an amazing 25 touchdowns, Steger was named the class 3A-4A MVP by the *Huntsville Times* and earned a spot on the *Birmingham News* 4A All-State team. His only Division 1A scholarship offer came from Alabama.

"I never really made any other visits because of the ACT thing," said Steger. "I had offers from some smaller schools like Jacksonville State and North Alabama, but I knew I could play in the SEC. I think I was the last one to sign with Alabama."

Steger feels that being a virtual unknown to start the 1993 season was to his benefit. He avoided a redshirt year, something that blue-chippers Alexander and Vallery could not accomplish. "No one knew who I was, so I had no pressure," he said. "I just went out and did my own thing."

Recruited as a fullback, Steger spent the first few days of practice working alongside Taurus and Eric Turner as Tarrant Lynch's backup. Unhappy with the position, Steger went to Kirksey. "I just told him that I was not a fullback and wanted to play tailback," Kirksey agreed and Steger was promptly moved to the scout team. "I went over to the scout team and worked real hard," he said "The guys on defense thought I was crazy. They kept telling me to chill out, but they already had their positions sewn up and I didn't. I spent one day on the scout team and Coach Kirksey asked me how I thought I did. I told him to just watch the film. The next day I was a tailback."

Earning a spot in the playing rotation at tailback was a dream come true for the obscure freshman. "I never had any doubts that I could contribute right away," he said. "I just had to go out and prove it and I'm a better person because of it. I wouldn't trade last year for anything."

Williams thinks the best of Brian Steger may be yet to come. "He's a good back and I like his style," the coach said. "It's a little different than folks around here are used to. His running style will change a little bit with the new offense and also due to the fact that he should play at around 205 this year as opposed to 215 last year. He'll be a major part of our offense."

The "new" offense will look quite similar to the Tide's ground-oriented attack under Mal Moore. The main difference will be simplification. Homer Smith has a reputation for having a complex offensive mind. If the truth be known, Alabama will have somewhere between nine and 15 running plays as opposed to 40 or 50 in 1993. Keep it simple, do it right.

That's just fine with Steger. "I think it's very important for everyone to be on the same page," he said. "Sometimes last year, we had the offense running two different plays at once. If our line comes together, we'll be a strong unit. There's a lot of talent out here. We just need to put it together and I know we will."

Brian Steger can hardly sit still when talking about Bama's chances in 1994. "We're going to be good, man. I just know it. I'm really looking forward to it. I'm so excited, you can't hold me down."

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Would-Be Running Back Is An All-Star Defender

by Kirk McNair

Move to strong safety was good for team and Shade

Bill Oliver, Alabama's defensive coordinator and secondary coach, has a sneaky reputation. That is, Bama's offensive coaches recognize that Oliver is capable of sneaking a good offensive player over to the secondary. In 1991 one of Alabama's top signees was Sam Shade, who came to Alabama as an outstanding running back prospect.

"They said they were going to look at me on defense first, then they'd look at me on offense," Shade remembers. "That look on offense never came. I never got one practice day, not one handoff."

"I don't know where Sam would fit in with our running backs now if he'd stayed on defense," Oliver said. "But I don't believe you could dynamite him over to offense after the success he has had."

No one doubts that Shade has been a rousing success as an Alabama defensive back. But Shade still has dreams of what might have been. "I'm happy the way things worked out, but sometimes I can't help but wonder how I would have been as a running back," he said. "I wanted to be a running back when I came here. I had been a running back since I was seven years old. I guess because I had played both ways in high school I was picked to go to defense."

Shade was a fine runner at Wenonah High School in Birmingham, picking up 800 yards and scoring 12 touchdowns his senior season. He was named a Super Senior by the *Birmingham News*. He was also an achiever in the classroom, winning the prestigious Bryant-Jordan Scholar-Athlete Award. And the senior is on schedule to graduate next spring with a degree in financial management.

Last year Shade was an All-Southeastern Conference performer. Going into this season he has been named on every preseason All-SEC team and on several preseason All-America squads. He is projected as a high draft pick for a professional football career.

"We did it for Sam," Oliver said of the decision to put Shade on defense. "He has the

physique of a strong safety (6-0, 195) and the ability to cover (pass receivers) like a cornerback. His best should be yet to come. We're going to try to help him have a big year and get to the next level."

Shade thinks the move was for the good of the team. "At the time we were kind of short-handed in the secondary," he said. "It was somewhat like it is now; we had four starters, but didn't have much depth."

Shade was a cornerback in his freshman year, seeing most of his duty in nickel situations, when Bama brings in an additional defensive back on passing downs. One thing that hasn't changed over the years is Shade's role when the Tide goes to a nickel defense. "When we go to the nickel, I'm more like a cornerback than a strong safety," he said. "And I still get a little practice time at corner."

Strong safety is one of those hybrid positions. The strong safety must be capable of playing like a defensive back against the pass and like a linebacker against the run. Shade was moved to strong safety as a sophomore in 1992 and started in all of Alabama's 13 games, all victories in that national championship season. "Coach Oliver told me during that year that the strong safety has to be one of the best athletes on the team," Shade said. "You have to be versatile to play strong safety. You have to be ready to play the short pass to the tight end, to cover deep, to cover in both zone and man, or play like a linebacker. I think I've displayed the ability to do that."

And Shade believes he is a much better football player now than he was a few years ago. "I have more experience, of course, and that means I have a better feel for the game," he said. "I've gone back and watched films of my early games. I've come a long way since that first game I started as a sophomore. I have a lot more awareness now. I have a good feel for when the opponent is going to run or pass. Part of it is being able to get good reads and I think part of it may be because I did play on offense for a long time."

"And I prepare better because I see things on film that I didn't see when I was younger."

"And I think I'm a better football player

Alabama expects a great deal from strong safety Sam Shade (31), who must play like a cornerback and a linebacker in the Tide scheme.

Barry Fikes Photo







Sam Shade (31) has been a regular in the Crimson Tide lineup since his freshman year and a starter at strong safety since his sophomore season in 1992.

Barry Fikes Photo

now because I know how to compete."

Even though Shade played in every game as a freshman, he was involved in only 17 tackles, although one of those did cause a fumble. As a sophomore he made 60 tackles, broke up four passes, recovered two fumbles and two pass interceptions, which he re-

turned for 16 yards. Last year he was Bama's second-leading tackler with 73, including five behind the line of scrimmage. He also had four passes broken up, caused a fumble and had two pass interceptions which he returned for 24 yards. Oddly, Shade's four career interceptions have come in two games,

two each against Arkansas in 1992 and two against South Carolina last season.

"Ordinarily you don't want a secondary guy to be a leading tackler," Oliver said. "But the way we use Sam, he has a lot of tackle opportunities. In fact, we've had him do things that are pretty difficult for a guy

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his size. Over at Mississippi State a couple of years ago they went to a two tight end offense and we had Sam covering a guy that weighed over 300 pounds. There were times I couldn't even see Sam on the film because of that tight end."

Shade said that one reason he makes a lot of tackles is because he can see a run play developing quickly and then react quickly. "I have a good feel for the play, and I know how to make it," he said. Another reason was the 1992 Alabama defensive front. "In 1992 those guys up front made all the tackles," Shade said. "I'd break on the play, but before I could get there the front had him. I made up my mind then that I was going to try to get to the ball a lot quicker."

Actually, Shade did not have a great year as a tackler in 1993, but there was a good reason. "Most people don't realize the extent of the injury Sam had last year," Oliver said. "He had a pinched nerve in his shoulder, which is incredibly painful. But Sam never complained, and you have to admire a guy who can play in pain and sacrifice for the team."

The injury occurred in practice midway

through last season. "After that I didn't get much contact in practice, but sometimes in a game I'd make a tackle and my arm would just go numb," Shade said. "I'd go to make a tackle, and all of a sudden I had one arm that I couldn't wrap the guy up with." The time between the SEC Championship Game and the Gator Bowl allowed the shoulder to heal, and he continued to rehabilitate during the off season.

One thing that Sam Shade is going to miss in the Alabama secondary this fall is the presence of Antonio Langham, the nation's most outstanding defensive back last year. "He's probably the best who has ever been here; one of a kind," Shade said. "You won't run into many like him. He's the total package as a player and a person."

"Antonio would compete every day, practice and game, and do whatever it took to make the play. He is the prototype on-the-field leader. Whenever you needed a big play, Antonio would make it. When we were out there, we all knew that corner was taken care

of. He was a big brother to all of us and I think he left a part of himself with us. I hope we can make him proud of us this year."

The pride factor is an important one to Shade. "I've thought about my goals a lot this summer," he said. "A lot of nice things have been written about me in preseason articles, but those don't matter."

"What I want is to be back in the Sugar Bowl. We have a good enough team to win the conference and achieve some real goals."

"Personally, I'd like to make All-SEC and All-America because the guys who have come along before me did that. But if the personal awards don't come, that doesn't matter. I haven't had a lot of accolades before, but we've been winning. And I think the people who matter think that I've been a good football player. My teammates know it, my coaches know it, the people we play against know it, and, most important, my family knows it."

"My family means a lot to me, and it's my goal to go out each week and play the best I can so I don't embarrass them. If I do my very best, I think I'll accomplish that goal."

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Tide Athletes Achieving In Classroom

by Louise Ford

Four-year old program paying dividends for Crimson Tide athletes

Similar to a Presidential State of the Union address, there is a state of The University of Alabama's progress in the area of athletic academics. And the information regarding the state of Bama's student-athletes would be regarded by many as more encouraging than the State of the Union.

One of the major indicators used to determine the success of a school's athletic academic programs is graduation rates. Alabama gets a passing grade in that area. In the latest reports, released in July, Alabama's graduation rates among athletes had risen from 36 per cent (of the athletes admitted in 1985-86) to 48 per cent (for the athletes admitted in 1987-88).

Progress has also been seen in the percentage differential between graduation rates for Alabama's overall student body and athletes. From the class that entered The University in 1985-86, 36 per cent of all athletes graduated in six years compared to 52 per cent of the student body, a 16-point differential. Reviewing the class which entered in 1987-88, that margin of difference shrunk to seven per cent.

The improvements in the success of Alabama's student-athletes can be attributed, in part, to the work of Alabama's Center for Athletic Student Services, established four years ago. Under the direction of Kevin Almond (director of Athletic Academics), CASS has helped supply Alabama's student-athletes with the necessary means to ensure academic success. The CASS facility provides all student-athletes with the most up-to-date computer equipment as well as access to group and individual tutoring.

"In the past four years we've seen a reorganization in athletic academics at Alabama," Almond said. "We've made progress and we

certainly want to continue to provide our student-athletes with a comprehensive academic support program."

Alabama's success has been documented by the rise in its graduation rates, but not to be overlooked is the large number of student-athletes who garner academic honors throughout the year. In 1993-94 alone, Alabama was atop the Southeastern Conference in the number of students on its academic honor roll. Alabama and Florida both placed 71 student-athletes on the SEC Academic Honor Roll for the 93-94 year, best in the conference. To be eligible, students needed to be of sophomore class standing and have a cumulative or semester grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale.

Nationally, Alabama student-athletes have fared well also. Senior women golfers Carrie Allen and Paige Hoefle earned a spot on the Smith Corona Scholastic All-America team, selected from golfers across the nation. Gymnasts Sheryl Dundas, Chasity Junkin, Kara Stilp and Meredith Willard were named Academic All-Americans by the National Association of Collegiate Gymnastics Coaches. Tide gymnasts also led the way on the SEC academic honor roll with five selections.

Two of Alabama's top foreign athletes, golfer Marten Olander and track star Marie Ohlund (both from Sweden), were the Tide's top scholar athletes during the 1993-94 year. Both were named the top Alabama Scholar Athletes and both won the Paul W. Bryant Student-Athlete Award, given annually by the Tuscaloosa County Alumni Association to the Tide's top male and female student-athletes.

Olander added to his award collection with a post-graduate scholarship from the Southeastern Conference. He was also a District IV GTE Academic All-America on the At-Large team, which includes every sport but football, basketball and baseball.

These are only a few of Alabama's student-athletes who have earned recognition in their academic pursuits. During the 1993-94 school year, 22 different student-athletes were listed on the President's List (for having a 4.0 GPA). Of those 22, five accomplished that feat in both the fall and spring semesters.

"We established the Center for Athletic Student Services in 1990 and we're now beginning to see the value of such a center through the increased number of student-



Kevin Almond is director of the Center for Athletic Student Services, which has played a big role in the academic improvement shown by Alabama athletes.

Barry Fikes Photo

athletes completing degree requirements and through the higher GPAs we're seeing from student-athletes," said Dr. Donald Crump, associate vice president for Academic Affairs at The University.

"In general, looked at over a four-five-six year time, we see now and will continue to see the impact of such a center and its value to all student-athletes," Dr. Crump said.

The goals set by The University and the CASS staff are simple but effective ones: Support student-athletes' efforts to receive a quality education and to graduate from The University of Alabama with a chosen degree; Encourage and facilitate student-athletes' goals for their career and for their personal development; Ensure that the academic integrity of The University is maintained; Comply with rules and regulations of The University, the SEC and the NCAA; Help ensure athletic eligibility during student-athletes' tenure at The University.

An area of change within the CASS staff is the addition of two new assistants. Cathy Elliot and Don Dawson are the newest members of the athletic academic staff joining Almond, Jon Dever and Brenda Elliot as the

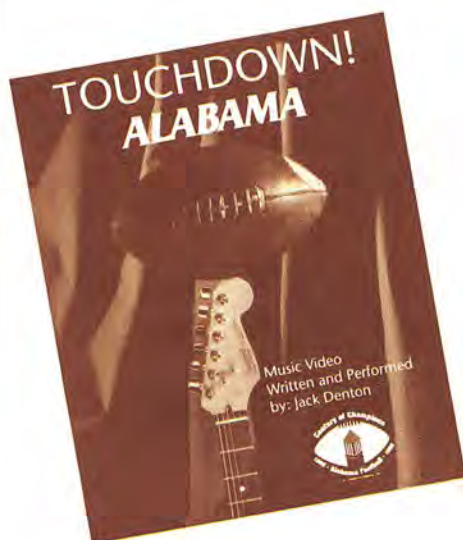
people who work directly with The University Office for Academic Affairs to ensure that each student-athlete receives a quality education.

One thing Almond and his staff must continually deal with is the ever-changing standards required for athletic eligibility. Just one of the many changes, which took affect with the class entering in 1991 is the new satisfactory progress rule. It states that each year, a student-athlete must have passed 24 hours in a degree program, 18 of which must be completed in the fall and spring semesters. A student-athlete may use summer school to earn only six hours toward eligibility. A student-athlete must also have completed 25 per cent of his degree work and hold a 1.8 GPA after his third year in college. After the fourth year, 50 per cent of the degree work is required and 75 per cent after the fifth year. In the fourth and fifth years, a 1.9 GPA must be maintained.

Almond explains that while the intent of this rule is good, it can hurt the athlete who chooses to change his major.

"This rule, in essence, forces incoming

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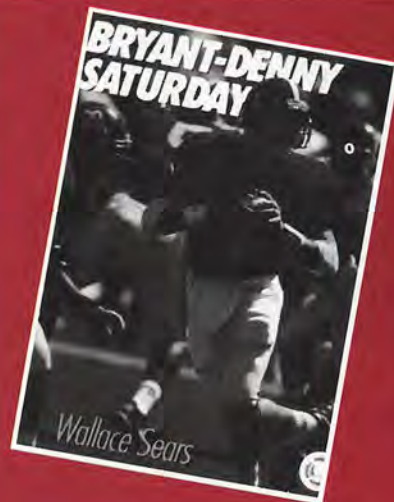
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student-athletes to make decisions concerning their major that regular students don't have to make as early," Almond said. While many students change their major two or three times, student-athletes are more regulated into making a decision earlier in order to fulfill the satisfactory progress rule.

There are continually new recommendations for improving academics eligibility standards. The latest calls for a sliding scale relationship between test scores and a student's GPA. A student-athlete with a GPA of 2.0 in core classes would need a 900 SAT score to be eligible while one with a 2.5 GPA would need only a 700 test score. Previously, prospective student-athletes needed a 2.0 GPA and 700 SAT score.

The debate on this issue centers around the reliability of standardized tests to determine if a high school student is capable of performing at the college level. Some coaches and educators feel these tests are racially and culturally biased and should not be relied on as heavily as a student's GPA. Regardless of which plan

goes into effect, the movement is definitely toward some type of a sliding scale.

The Southeastern Conference presidents voted to accept eight "partial qualifiers" each academic year. It will allow each institution two for football, one for men's basketball, one for other men's sports and four for women's sports. The partial qualifiers will not receive any money during their freshman year, but can receive scholarships during their next three years if satisfactory academic progress is made the first year. The only league school not eligible for these partial qualifiers is Florida, which is prohibited by the state of Florida board of regents from accepting any athletes who fall below the minimum NCAA standards.

It is always encouraging to see the success stories of partial qualifiers who made the grade in college and eventually received their degrees. Remembering back a couple of years, one such success story came out of Alabama. In 1988 Eric Curry entered The University of Alabama as a Proposition 48 casualty. A "B" student in high school, he missed the necessary SAT required score by 10 points. Curry sat out of football his first

year and concentrated on his school work. In the fall of 1989 he was ready to join the Crimson Tide squad when a broken foot in August practices ended his season before it began. He did make the most of his remaining three years of eligibility, helping Alabama win the national championship in 1992 and leaving Alabama as a consensus All-America and a first round NFL draft selection.

All these accomplishments aside, Eric Curry earned his bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice in August of 1992 prior to his senior season with the football team. He is just one shining example of an individual who just needed a chance and when given the chance made the most of it.

In the coming years, much debate will come forth regarding academic standards: Should they be raised, or are they too stringent and biased? No matter what the result of these debates, one thing is for sure, The University of Alabama will continue to produce academic success stories like the academic All-SEC, All-America and post-graduate scholars. Along with that, Alabama will continue to watch its graduation rates rise as well.

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Football Has Part In Women's Soccer

by Donna Fromme

Former Bama quarterback Ken Stabler unknowingly had a role in new Tide sport

Don Staley has never met Ken Stabler. But the former Alabama football great had a part in bringing Staley to Tuscaloosa to re-start the Crimson Tide women's soccer program.

Staley was head soccer coach at Radford University in Virginia last year, a year in which both Alabama and Auburn elected to add women's soccer as a sport for the 1994 season. Auburn was first to go after Staley. On the way to the airport to fly to Auburn, Staley picked up a book to read on the flight. That book was "Snake," Stabler's autobiography.

"There I was on a plane going to Auburn for an interview and reading 'Snake,'" Staley said. "And as I'm reading I'm thinking that (The University of) Alabama seems like some place and I'd love to be able to check it out while I'm in the state." But, of course, his business in the state was at Auburn.

Then, a few days after his Auburn interview, Staley got a telephone call from Bama Associate Athletics Director Don Gambrell offering an interview. Staley was at the Final Four, but left at halftime of the NCAA men's basketball championship game to fly to Tuscaloosa. "On the flight down I couldn't help but remember that I had been reading 'Snake,' and thinking what a great place The University of Alabama must be, and there I was headed for an interview," Staley said.

Alabama offered Staley the job. "I called Auburn from the airport and withdrew," Staley said. "I didn't even wait until I got home. I knew where I wanted to be. I couldn't wait to get here. I still feel like a kid in a candy store."

Staley said his first days at Alabama were spent "in awe" of Head Football Coach Gene Stallings, the tradition of Paul Bryant, and "the pride, the history, and the tradition that are so rich at this university." But he also knew he had to get to work.

Taking over the soccer program at

Alabama was unlike a new coach moving into a new job in most cases. There was a lot more than just meeting fellow athletics department personnel and getting the office decorated. The good news was he was a head coach at a national powerhouse of college athletics. The bad news was he was starting a soccer program from scratch. He was head coach of a team with no players.

Staley's first official day on the job after finishing his contract at Radford last fall was the day after Christmas. And that day found him in Miami, looking at some of the nation's top junior women's soccer players in the Junior Orange Bowl. Ultimately, 85 percent of Staley's first crop of signees would come from players he identified in Miami.

Since January 1, Staley has been keeping a journal of his work. When his first Alabama season is complete, in late November, he'll be able to look back at his calendar. And he may wonder how he was able to pull it all together so quickly.

"There was no time to think about how exciting it was that I had just gotten a job at Alabama," Staley said. "We were on a torrid pace. Our first recruiting weekend we had 16 players visit. An ordinary recruiting weekend would be perhaps two or three prospects. Finally, this summer, we took a short vacation and there was one day where I sat back in my chair, a cold beverage in my hand, looking out over the ocean, and thought about how exciting it is to be on the ground floor of something special."

Ground floor is right. Starting from scratch has meant working to fill a roster and enroll the 17 players he has signed; putting together a competitive schedule; ordering practice clothes, uniforms and equipment; and, in what has been his biggest challenge, overseeing the building of Alabama's soccer stadium, which is adjacent to The University's Student Recreation Center. Sod was just being placed on the field August 16. The first home game is September 7.

Staley also had to secure an alternate field until the new facility is ready. He and his assistant coaches, Karen McGrath and Laura Topolski, even put the goals together themselves to help hurry the project along and get the alternate facility ready for August 14, when players reported.

"It's like we're in a track relay race and now we're closing in on the finish line,"



Don Staley

Staley said. "Everything is falling into place. Now comes the important thing: getting prepared to play some ball games."

Staley said, "We may not have had one of the top recruiting classes in the country according to those who rank those things. The top recruiting classes come from years of cultivating those kids and watching them. I like the kids we recruited. I think they're the kind of kids who can go to battle and win. There were a lot of late nights where we were closing down the building going after these kids."

To get his first class of players, Staley said he drew on Alabama's football tradition. He went to the Paul W. Bryant Museum and watched videotape highlights of Crimson Tide football.

"I was so enthused after I came out of there, recruiting was an easy sell," he said. "We sold the kids on pride, history, and football. We told them about all the amenities and resources we have here because of football. They say you should know which side your bread is buttered on, and this soccer coach knows that football generates the revenue. And I can't wait to watch. And the kids are the same way. They can't wait. Big time football creates excitement."

"We took our prospects to David Hobbs' basketball game against Mississippi State. It was a great game and that's all they talked about the rest of the weekend. We took them to the athletics academics center, and

they couldn't help but be impressed by the support system there. It was an easy sell."

Staley and McGrath want Alabama's first season of women's soccer to look anything but an easy first-year team. They've put too much work in the polishing touches around every aspect of the program.

"We busted our butts to get it all done, and I think we're going to reap the reward of all this hard work," Staley said. "When this first year is over, I want to know that we put together a bunch of girls who really wanted to be at this university and by the end of the season I want them to know what it means to play for The University of Alabama, that they feel the pride that the Joe Namaths, the Johnny Mussos, the Bob Baumhowers felt. I want them to know they had a hand in building something special as the first team."

McGrath, who was Staley's assistant at Radford, said, "I want to prove the critics wrong. I want to prove that first-year programs can win. I want us to be unique. I want us to prove that a first-year program can be good. I want people to say, 'Look at The University of Alabama and what they did.' There are a lot of soccer programs that will be starting up in 1995, and I would love to know they used us as a blueprint for their plans. We have a tremendous amount of support from Coach Ingram (Athletics Director Hootie Ingram) on down, and we have players who have something to prove. Some of them were passed over by the established programs, and they want to go out and show those schools they are talented players. They know that a first-year program doesn't have to be inferior to an established program. We want to prove that just because you are first-year program, it doesn't mean you are a pushover."

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How Far Will Bama Go?

by Kirk McNair

Though Bama football recruiters may stay close to home, top national prospects list the Tide

It is no secret that Alabama's football success has been built primarily with players from the Alabama high school programs. This fall, the Crimson Tide brought in 26 new players, and 19 of them were products of in-state high school coaching. That's good policy, because statistics show that even though Alabama is a relatively low population state, it is high in producing college and professional football players. But Alabama is one of that small handful of schools with a national football reputation. An Alabama coach can get an audience with virtually any top prep player, if Bama is interested. (On the other side of the coin, many players tell recruiting services and newspapers they are considering Alabama because of the prestige that gives to their wish list.)

There are reports that Alabama this year intends to limit its recruiting area to perhaps within 250 miles of Tuscaloosa, taking in places like Georgia from Atlanta westward, the Florida panhandle, and most of Tennessee, Louisiana and Mississippi, but leaving the far reaches (i.e., Texas, the Carolinas, South Florida) to others. There's a school of thought that time spent trying to entice a Dallas player who will have a 10-hour drive to Tuscaloosa might be better spent on recruiting an Atlanta player who will have a four-hour drive.

Nevertheless, once again this year, top prospects from out of the Southeast are expressing an interest in the Crimson Tide.

Last year Alabama appeared to be on the verge of signing a handful of top Texas players. Wide receiver Aaron Oliver actually committed to the Tide, but later reneged and ended up at Texas A&M. Running back Jerod Douglas was reportedly torn between Texas and Alabama, then signed with Baylor. When it was all over, Alabama had one signee from Texas, center Chris Sign.

But it's no surprise that a handful of top Texas players are again being linked to Alabama. (Thus far, though, Alabama does not appear to be trying to get in-

involved with quarterback Jay Rodgers of Austin. Jay is the son of Texas Recruiting Coordinator Randy Rodgers, but that hasn't stopped Texas A&M, Notre Dame, Tennessee and Indiana from trying to woo him away from the Longhorns.)

Shane Lechler, a 6-3, 215-pound quarterback at East Bernard, is the son of Baylor graduates, but Alabama is one of the schools on his list.

It's no surprise that the top running back prospect in Texas has been linked to Bama. John Humphrey, 5-9, 180, from Galveston Ball, is the cousin of former Tide running star Bobby Humphrey. Two of Humphrey's teammates, wide receiver Rodney Smith (6-0, 190) and strong safety Cephus Scott (6-2, 205) also mention the Tide.

Two of the top offensive linemen in Texas are Michael Henry, 6-3, 300, of Houston Madison, and Keith Frierson, 6-7, 255, of Deer Park, and both are considering Alabama.

Another from Texas supposedly interested in Bama is linebacker Darren Hester (6-2, 220) of Dallas Hillcrest.

Sometimes there's a connection to Alabama. For instance, Delbert Cowsette, a 6-3, 235-pound linebacker at Central Catholic High

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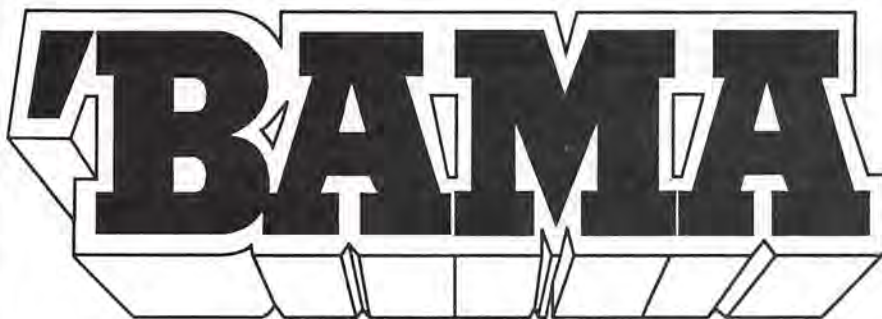
Beginning October 1st

School in Cleveland, Ohio, has listed his favorite schools as Ohio State, Penn State, Alabama and Auburn. He undoubtedly has an Alabama background. No fewer than five other Ohio prep stars have Alabama listed as among the schools they are considering. They are: Demetrius Harris, a 5-10, 180-pound running back from Brunswick, who is originally from Alabama, and who also lists Ohio State, Notre Dame and Michigan; Jarrit Goode, a 6-2, 220-pound linebacker from Benedictine in Cleveland, who also lists Ohio State, Penn State and Clemson; Antoine Winfield, a 5-10, 185-pound defensive back from Akron Garfield who also lists Michigan, Ohio State, Nebraska, Washington and Tennessee; Andre Barkley, a 6-1, 195-pound running back from Cincinnati Country Day; and Charles Woodson, a 6-2, 185-pound running back from Ross High School in Fremont.

Some other top players from non-traditional Alabama recruiting areas who are being listed as interested in the Crimson Tide are:

Kwazcon Lezerrett, a 6-3, 210-pound linebacker from Brooklyn, New York, Lincoln; Tony Williams, a 5-11, 190-pound running back from Smithtown, New York, St. Anthony; Damon Harrington, a 6-1, 201-pound defensive back from Elkton, Maryland; Omar Jackson, a defensive back, 5-11, 180, from Oxen Hill, Maryland; Roosevelt Colvins, a 6-3, 220-pound linebacker from Indianapolis, Indiana, Broad Ripple; Oku Satcher, a 6-3, 230-pound defensive end from Joliet, Illinois, West; Pat Hau, a 6-5, 290-pound offensive lineman from Edina, Minnesota; Rusty Rushing, a 6-1, 170-pound quarterback from Owasso, Oklahoma; Derek Allen, a defensive lineman, 6-6, 275, from Conway, Arkansas; Kevin Williams, a 6-1, 170-pound quarterback from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, Dollarway; and Michael Bennett, a 6-4, 200-pound defensive back from Berwick, Pennsylvania.

And from way out West, quarterback John Fox, 6-2, 190, from Corona, California, Centennial; Josh Fiske, 6-2, 185, quarterback, from Santa Ynez, California; Andre Hardeman, 6-0, 215, running back, from Galena Park, California, Northshore; and Justin Wilcox, 6-3, 180, quarterback, from Junction City, Oregon.



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BAMA SCORECARD

Third Saturday In October

Almost everyone knows that 1995 Southeastern Conference football schedules have a glaring change from the past two-thirds century: the Alabama-Tennessee game, by any measure the South's most storied rivalry, is not scheduled for the Third Saturday in October.

Late this month there was a news story that the SEC was looking into future schedules with the idea of moving some key league games to later in the year. Primary mover and shaker for this is Tennessee, which currently plays two of its most difficult conference games—against Georgia and Florida—in the first three weeks of the season. SEC Executive Associate Commissioner Mark Womack said the league was putting together mock schedules for consideration by athletics directors.

While they are at it, why don't the SEC schedule-makers move two games and put Alabama-Tennessee back on the Third Saturday in October. That's right. It takes moving only two games.

Currently the Alabama-Tennessee game is scheduled for October 14, the second Saturday of the month. The first thing one must look at when figuring a way to rectify this is who Alabama and Tennessee are scheduled to play on October 21. For Tennessee, it's easy. The Vols have an open date. They would undoubtedly be happy to exchange their open date from the week after Alabama (and before South Carolina) to the week before Alabama.

Alabama is currently scheduled to play Ole Miss on October 21. A team with an open date on October 21 is Arkansas, which is scheduled to play Ole Miss on October 14.

So the easy solution is Alabama and Ole Miss move to October 14 and Ole Miss and Arkansas move to October 21 to allow Alabama and Tennessee to continue playing on the Third Saturday in October.

Does it matter if that tradition continues? Twenty-five years ago, when the NCAA was celebrating college football's centennial, four paintings were commissioned to mark the event. One was of the first college football game, one of famed Notre Dame Head Coach Knute Rockne addressing his players in the lockerroom, one was of former Heisman Trophy winner O.J. Simpson of Southern Cal fleeing from UCLA defenders, and one was of Alabama's Dixie Howell completing a pass to Don Hutson (with "the other end," Paul Bryant, running to make a block) against Tennessee. That's how much tradition is involved, and it seems a shame to tamper with it when the solution is so easy.

Tide Record To Fall

Alabama will be eliminated from the NCAA record book in one category on September 3, barring one of the biggest upsets in college football history. It doesn't have anything to do with Bama's distinctly unhistoric date with Chattanooga. On September 3 Miami will host Georgia Southern in the Orange Bowl. Miami and Alabama currently share the NCAA record for consecutive home victories at 57. Of course, Alabama should be in the record book with an asterisk since while winning 57 straight games at Denny/Bryant-Denny Stadium, the Tide was losing an occasional home game at Birmingham's Legion Field.

Bama's 57 consecutive victories in Tuscaloosa were sandwiched between a 1963 loss to Florida and a 1982 loss to Southern Miss, all under Paul Bryant.

Signing Dates

Here are the 1994-95 National Letter of Intent signing dates as approved by the Collegiate Commissioners Association:

Football: February 1-April 1 (plus junior college transfers December 21-January 15)

Basketball: November 9-November 16 and April 12-May 15

Volleyball and women's soccer: February 8-August 1

All other sports: Early period November 9-November 16, late period April 12-August 1

NCAA Date

There has been no summer word (talk radio rumors aside) on the status of the NCAA inquiry into the Alabama athletics program. It is possible Alabama will not hear anything until September 23, when The University must be apprised of the status of the probe.

The man whose story instigated the investigation, former Alabama player Gene Jelks, is currently being sued by former Tide Assistant Coach Jerry Pullen, whom Jelks accused of wrong-doing. A hearing in Atlanta had been scheduled for August 8, but because of a conflict in the judge's schedule the hearing has been postponed until at least October. Jelks had previously divulged that Auburn booster Corky Frost had a role in Jelks' activities.

Tough Field

Alabama's men's basketball team is expected to be a good one, and Coach David Hobbs' squad will probably find out early how it measures up. The Preseason NIT field of 16 teams includes nine teams that made last season's NCAA Tournament and

another four who played in the 1994 NIT. The tournament is single elimination.

Alabama faces Kansas State in a first round matchup at 7:30 p.m. November 16 at Coleman Coliseum. The winner meets the winner of the New Mexico State-Southern Cal game at a site to be determined after the first round games. Semifinals and finals are played at Madison Square Garden in New York November 23 and 25.

Hall Of Fame Nominees

The Board of Directors of the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame has announced the finalists for induction into the class of 1995. Five nominees from the modern era and two from the Old Timers category will be selected by a committee for induction. The induction banquet will be February 25 at the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center.

A number of nominees have University of Alabama connections. The modern era includes a surprisingly large number of basketball nominees, including two of the best every to play for Bama, Leon Douglas and T.R. Dunn. Others with Alabama connections who have been nominated in the modern category are Alabama Head Football Coach Gene Stallings, former Crimson Tide players Bob Baumhower and Scott Hunter, and longtime Bama Head Swimming and Diving Coach Don Gambriel.

In the Old Timers category are former Alabama basketball star Jim Homer; Hayden Riley, who served as Alabama's chief football recruiter under Paul Bryant as well as Bama's head basketball and head baseball coach; and Hal Self, winner of the Jacobs' Award as the SEC's best blocker and star of Bama's last Rose Bowl appearance.

Still Swimming

Former Alabama swimming star Jon Olsen swam to a second place finish in the 100-meter freestyle at the US Swimming National Championships. That finish earned Olsen a berth on the US World Championship team, which will compete in Rome. This marks the second time Olsen has made the team, but after qualifying in 1991, Olsen fell ill and was unable to compete.

Still Swinging

Former Alabama Diving Coach Bob Webster, who won two gold medals for platform diving as an Olympic participant, is still competing, but in a different arena. Webster, 55, recently won the championship in his age group in the National Racquetball Association Tournament in Minnesota. It was his first time to participate in the event.

*BAMA, Inside The Crimson Tide/SEPTEMBER '94

Boston Mystery

One of the stories during the Major League Baseball Players' strike was of Boston Red Sox pitching star meeting with Red Sox officials to plead for the job of his manager, Butch Hobson. Hobson has been widely rumored as unlikely to survive the season, his second on a two-year contract.

Prior to the strike, one of the strangest stories was that from Boston involving the possibility of Hobson, a former Tide baseball star and football player, leaving the Red Sox to join the athletics department at The University of Alabama in an administrative capacity.

Alabama Athletics Director Hootie Ingram was quick to deny the story. "I am uncertain as to where these rumors surfaced, but they are inaccurate," Ingram said. "First of all, Butch has a job; and second, we do not have any positions vacant within our department and we have no plans of creating any positions."

Baseball Just Ahead

New Alabama Head Baseball Coach Jim Wells will open fall practice September 19. The Tide will practice daily at 1:30 p.m. with intrasquad games each Saturday and Sunday. Saturday starting times will depend on football starting times. Practices are open to the public.

Scissum Gets Position

Willard Scissum, an offensive lineman for Alabama 1981-84, has returned to The University as a graduate assistant in the strength and conditioning program. After three years in the National Football League, Scissum coached at Alabama A&M in Huntsville. While at Bama he will work on an MBA and also watch his cousin, Tide freshman fullback Ed Scissum.

Golf Winners And Leavers

Patrick Vadden, an upcoming junior for the Alabama men's golf team, won the Kentucky Amateur this summer and will play in the United States Amateur. Fifteen Tide golfers have qualified for the Amateur since 1974, the year Bama's Jerry Pate won it. At least one Tide has played every year since 1989.

Paige Hoeffle, a senior on last year's Alabama women's golf team, won the Iowa State Amateur to qualify for the United States Women's Amateur.

And congratulations to the only two first time winners on the 1994 PGA Tour, former Tiders Dickey Pride and Steve Lowery.

The last Alabama women's team golfer to win her state championship was Jill Donaldson of Louisiana. Donaldson, who would have been a senior this year, has elected not to return to Bama. She has been the Tide's top golfer the past two years. She is engaged to be married and elected to stay closer to home. She will complete her eligibility at Tulane.

Crimson Tide Fall Schedules

Although most of the attention is on football in the fall, here are all of Alabama's fall sports schedules. Volleyball and soccer are women's sports.

Football

Date	Opponent	Site	Tentative Central Time
Sept. 3	Tennessee-Chattanooga	Birmingham	4:00
Sept. 10	Vanderbilt	Tuscaloosa (JP-TV)	11:30
Sept. 17	Arkansas	Fayetteville (ABC-TV)	2:30
Sept. 24	Tulane	Birmingham	1:30
Oct. 1	Georgia	Tuscaloosa (ABC-TV)	2:30
Oct. 8	*Southern Miss	Tuscaloosa	2:30
Oct. 15	Tennessee	Knoxville (ABC-TV)	11:00
Oct. 22	Ole Miss	Tuscaloosa	1:30
Nov. 5	LSU	Baton Rouge	7:00
Nov. 12	Mississippi State	Starkville	1:30
Nov. 19	Auburn	Birmingham (ABC-TV)	2:30
	*Homecoming		
SEC Championship Game			
Dec. 3	TBA	Atlanta (ABC-TV)	1:00

Volleyball

Date	Opponent	Central Time
	<i>Crimson Tide Classic</i>	
Sept. 2	Georgia State	1:00
Sept. 2	Austin Peay	7:00
Sept. 3	Southwest Texas	1:00
Sept. 3	Louisville	7:00
Sept. 6	@ Alabama-Birmingham	7:00
	<i>Maryland Invitational</i>	
Sept. 9	George Washington	4:00
Sept. 10	Maryland	12:00
Sept. 10	Central Michigan	4:00
Sept. 13	Samford	3:00
Sept. 13	Middle Tennessee	7:00
Sept. 16	@ Georgia State	5:00
Sept. 17	@ Georgia Tech	6:00
Sept. 18	Clemson @ Atlanta	4:30
Sept. 20	Alabama-Birmingham	7:00
Sept. 23	Tennessee	7:00
Sept. 25	Georgia	2:00
Sept. 27	Jackson State @ Birmingham	5:00
Sept. 27	@ Samford	7:00
Sept. 30	@ South Carolina	6:00
Oct. 2	@ Florida	1:00
Oct. 4	Southern Miss	7:00
Oct. 7	@ Ole Miss	7:00
Oct. 9	@ Mississippi State	2:00
Oct. 14	Arkansas	7:00
Oct. 16	LSU	2:00
Oct. 18	Auburn	7:00
Oct. 21	@ Kentucky	6:30
Oct. 25	Alabama State	3:00
Oct. 25	Chattanooga	7:00
Oct. 27	@ Auburn	7:00
Nov. 4	Mississippi State	7:00
Nov. 6	Ole Miss	2:00
Nov. 11	@ LSU	7:30
Nov. 13	@ Arkansas	2:00
Nov. 18-	SEC Tournament	
Nov. 20	@ Gainesville	

Soccer

Date	Opponent	Central Time
Sept. 3	@ Appalachian State	3:00
Sept. 4	@ Davidson	2:00
Sept. 7	Georgia Southern	2:00
Sept. 10	Kentucky	4:00
Sept. 14	South Alabama	4:00
Sept. 17	Stetson @ Panama City	5:00
Sept. 18	South Alabama @ Panama City	1:00
Sept. 21	Mobile	4:00
Sept. 25	@ Arkansas	1:00
Sept. 28	@ Vanderbilt	7:30
Oct. 2	Furman	2:00
Oct. 9	Texas	2:00
Oct. 12	Auburn	4:00
Oct. 15	@ No. Carolina-Wilmington	1:00
Oct. 16	@ East Carolina	2:00
Oct. 22	North Carolina-Charlotte	4:00
Oct. 29	Ark.-Little Rock @ Mobile	12:00
Oct. 30	Georgia State @ Mobile	12:00
Nov. 4-	SEC Tournament	
Nov. 7	@ Fayetteville	

Cross Country (Men's and Women's)

Date	Event
Sept. 9	@ Tulane Invitational
Sept. 17	Crimson Classic
Sept. 24	@ Vanderbilt Invitational
Oct. 7	@ Notre Dame Invitational
Oct. 15	@ Penn State Invitational
Oct. 29	SEC Championships @ Fayetteville
Nov. 12	NCAA District Championships @ Greenville, South Carolina
Nov. 21	NCAA Championships @ Fayetteville

Schedules of Alabama's 1994 Football Opponents

Team	Sept. 3	Sept. 10	Sept. 17	Sept. 24	Oct. 1	Oct. 8	Oct. 15	Oct. 22	Oct. 29	Nov. 5	Nov. 12	Nov. 19	Nov. 26
CHATTANOOGA Moccasins Chattanooga, Tenn.	@ ALABAMA (Birmingham) 4 p.m.	Alcorn State	Gardner Webb	Georgia Southern	Marshall		VMI	Western Carolina	Appalachian State	Citadel	East Tennessee St.	Furman	
VANDERBILT Commodores Nashville, Tenn.	Wake Forest	@ ALABAMA (Tuscaloosa) 11:30-1 p.m.	Ole Miss		Arkansas @ Little Rock	@ Cincinnati	@ Georgia	South Carolina	Northern Illinois	@ Kentucky		Florida	Tennessee
ARKANSAS Razorbacks Fayetteville, Ark.	SMU	@ South Carolina	ALABAMA 230-ABC TV	@ Memphis	Vanderbilt @ Little Rock	@ Tennessee	Ole Miss		@ Auburn	@ Mississippi State	Northern Illinois		LSU @ Little Rock
TULANE Green Wave New Orleans, La.	Southern Miss	@ Rice	South Carolina	@ ALABAMA (Birmingham)		@ Memphis	TCU	@ Mississippi State	@ Maryland	Navy	Ole Miss	LSU	
GEORGIA Bulldogs Athens, Ga.	@ South Carolina	Tennessee	Northeast Louisiana	Ole Miss	@ ALABAMA (Tuscaloosa)	Clemson	Vanderbilt	@ Kentucky	@ Florida		@ Auburn		Nov. 25 Georgia Tech
SOUTHERN MISS Golden Eagles Hattiesburg, Miss.	Tulane	Virginia Tech	Memphis	@ Texas A&M	@ East Carolina	@ ALABAMA (Tuscaloosa) 2:30-4 p.m.	Southwestern Louisiana	Samford	Tulsa	@ Florida	@ LSU		
TENNESSEE Volunteers Knoxville, Tenn.	@ UCLA	@ Georgia	Florida	@ Mississippi State	Washington State	Arkansas	ALABAMA		@ South Carolina		Memphis	Kentucky	@ Vanderbilt
OLE MISS Rebels Oxford, Miss.	Auburn	Southern Illinois	@ Vanderbilt	@ Georgia	Florida		@ Arkansas	@ ALABAMA (Tuscaloosa)	LSU	Memphis	@ Tulane		Mississippi State
LSU Fighting Tigers Baton Rouge, La.	Texas A&M	Mississippi State	@ Auburn		South Carolina	@ Florida	Kentucky		@ Ole Miss	ALABAMA	Southern Miss	@ Tulane	Arkansas @ Little Rock
MISSISSIPPI STATE Bulldogs Starkville, Miss.	@ Memphis	@ LSU		Tennessee	Arkansas State	Auburn	@ South Carolina	Tulane	@ Kentucky	Arkansas	ALABAMA		@ Ole Miss
AUBURN Tigers Auburn, Ala.	@ Ole Miss	Northeast Louisiana	LSU	East Tennessee St.	Sept. 29 Kentucky	@ Mississippi State	@ Florida		Arkansas	East Carolina	Georgia	@ ALABAMA (Birmingham)	

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